Submillimetre Fourier Transform Spectroscopy of Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune

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Planetary spectroscopy at submillimetre wavelengths is a potentially rich field for the study of minor species because it is the region of maximum intensity for the rotational lines of many potential atmospheric constituents.

Our previous attempts to measure submillimetre planetary spectra from the JCMT were hindered by problems associated with the facility bolometric detector which was not designed for broadband astronomical spectroscopy. In this paper we present preliminary results from the commissioning run of a new dual polarization detector system which has been specifically developed for use with our Fourier transform spectrometer at the JCMT. Following a brief review of the salient features of the detector and spectrometer, we will present spectroscopic observations of Jupiter, Uranus and Neptune obtained during August 1996 from the JCMT. The paper will conclude with an analysis of the sensitivity of this technique and plans for future observations.

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